



# GUIDE FOR MEDIA PRACTITIONERS

ON THE REPORTING AND COVERAGE OF CHILDREN

REVISED VERSION  
2024



# Foreword

The Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), as the focal government inter-agency body on children's rights, acknowledges the media as an important partner in cultivating a child-friendly Philippines. With the Philippines being a State Party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), it is only incumbent for us to guide the media landscape towards exercising strategies and practices which promote the rights and well-being of the children, especially those in need of special protection.

Children are particularly vulnerable in the media due to the circumstances of their cognitive, emotional, and social development. They require extra care, protection, and thoughtful consideration to shield them from the potential risks of harm, stigmatization, and revictimization.

At a time when the media landscape is rapidly transforming and its influence over children is growing profoundly, we acknowledge the need for more responsible, ethical, and child-friendly media reporting, case coverage, and content creation in the Philippines. We believe that the media is a key player in shaping perceptions and attitudes toward children, and it is our duty to ensure that their representation is not only accurate but also nurturing, respectful, and in the best interest of children.

The first-ever Guide for Media Practitioners on the Reporting and Coverage of Cases Involving Children was developed in 2000 and was revised/updated in 2008 by the Committee for the Special Protection of Children (CSPC), chaired by the Department of Justice (DOJ). More importantly, CWC as a member-agency of the CSPC, sees the need to cover relevant child-related laws enacted post-2008, and to address new and emerging key players in the media. Thus, the CWC pursued the enhancement of the Guide for Media Practitioners in 2024 by conducting a series of consultations through key informant interviews, consultation workshops, and validation sessions with the media, partner organizations, and the children.

As this guide is grounded on the UNCRC, it aims to provide clear and actionable standards that support media practitioners, content creators, and personalities in the realm of social media, helping them produce materials that are sensitive to children's rights and that uphold their meaningful and ethical participation, while advocating for their issues and concerns.

This guide is a significant step in fostering a child-friendly environment, not only in terms of how children can be influenced by their media consumption, but also in influencing the media itself to avoid stories and materials that may under-represent or misrepresent children. Such cases can perpetuate stereotyping, bullying, and exploitation.

Moving forward, let us work together to cultivate a child-friendly media landscape which advocates for the best interest of the children, encourages their genuine participation, and represents their diverse circumstances, experiences, and ambitions in life. By adhering to these guidelines, we can collectively contribute to a society where children are not merely subjects of media coverage, but are recognized as active contributors to their stories.

Let us commit to ensuring a positive and fair representation of children in all forms of media at all times.

  
**USEC. ANGELO M. TAPALES**  
Executive Director V

# Acknowledgements

The development of the guidelines on the media reporting/coverage of cases on children (enhanced version) is attributed to the invaluable contributions of representatives of various organizations (e.g. media, government agencies, non-government organizations) and, most especially, of the children whose knowledge and dedication provided foundation in this document.

Specifically, we extend our gratitude to the members of the broadcast, print, and online media, who offered their perspectives and recommendations, which ensured that the Guidelines reflect the best practices in the industry. In addition, we recognize the expertise and technical inputs of the CSPC and some of the members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (IAC-CSAC) and the National Steering Committee on Child Rights Advocacy—including the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Center for Law of Armed Conflict; Commission on Human Rights (CHR); DOJ, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) - Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns (BWSC); Department of National Defense (DND); Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Office of the Undersecretary for International Affairs, Attached and Supervised Agencies under the Office of the Secretary, Program Management Bureau, and Traditional Media Service; International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF); National Council for Children's Television (NCCT); National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP); Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU); Philippine Commission on Women (PCW); Philippine Information Agency (PIA); Philippine National Police Women and Children Protection Center (PNP WCPC); Plan International Pilipinas Foundation Inc.; Save the Children Philippines; and the World Vision Development Foundation. We also recognize a few partner organizations who have been working closely with us in the children's sector such as the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD) as the Convenor of the Child Rights Network, the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB), and the UN Women. Your insights into child rights and welfare were instrumental in shaping our approach for these guidelines.

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The collective involvement of all stakeholders helped strategize the comprehensive enhancement of the Guidelines, through this 2024 version, which fosters a media landscape where children's rights are prioritized.

We hope for the continuous commitment of everyone, especially in updating the Guidelines, as necessary, in the years to come.

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# Definition of Terms

**Media practitioners:** All persons who are involved in creating news content for any form of mass media, including the internet; the term includes but is not limited to editors, publishers, reporters, columnists, writers, photojournalists, videographers, anchors and announcers, program hosts, program content producers and directors, film content producers and directors, their production staff; and media officers and spokespersons of different government agencies and instrumentalities who are reporting child-related offenses in all their different media platforms.

**Content Creators and Social Media Personalities:** All persons, bloggers, vloggers, and influencers, including private citizens such as parents and child caregivers, whether or not they work for media organizations, and who create and/or publish content about and/or involving children for the purpose of sharing to their followers and the public in general on social media and online platforms.

**Child:** A person below eighteen (18) years of age or one who is eighteen (18) years of age or over but is unable to fully take care of or protect themselves from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination because of a physical or mental disability or condition, provided that:

1. For the purpose of Republic Act No. 11642, and where relevant, a child shall also refer to an adult son, daughter, or offspring; and,
2. For the purpose of Republic Act No. 11930, a child shall also refer to:

- a. A person regardless of age who is presented, depicted or portrayed as a child as defined herein; and,

- b. Computer-generated, digitally or manually crafted images, or graphics of a person who is represented or who is made to appear to be a child as defined herein.

**Child at Risk of Coming into Conflict with the Law (Republic Act No. 9344):** A child who is vulnerable to and at the risk of committing criminal offenses because of personal, family and social circumstances, such as, but not limited to, the following:

1. Being abused by any person through sexual, physical, psychological, mental, economic or any other means, while their parents or guardian refuse, are unwilling, or unable to provide protection for the child;
2. Being exploited including sexually or economically;
3. Being abandoned or neglected, and whose parents or guardian cannot be found after diligent search and inquiry;
4. Coming from a dysfunctional or broken family, or having no parent or guardian;
5. Being out of school;
6. Being a street child;
7. Being a member of a gang;
8. Living in a community with a high level of criminality or drug abuse; and
9. Living in situations of armed conflict.

**Child in Conflict with the Law (Republic Act No. 9344):** A child who is alleged as, accused of, or adjudged as, having committed an offense under Philippine laws.

**Children Affected by Armed Conflict (Republic Act No. 11188):** All children population experiencing or who have experienced armed conflict.

**Children Involved in Armed Conflict (Republic Act No. 11188):** Children who are either forcibly, compulsorily recruited, or who voluntarily joined a government force or any armed group in any capacity. They may participate directly in armed hostilities as combatants or fighters; or indirectly through support roles such as scouts, spies, saboteurs, decoys, checkpoint assistants, couriers, messengers, porters, cooks or as sexual objects.

**Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (Republic Act No. 11188):** Refers to all children involved in armed conflict, children affected by armed conflict, and internally displaced children.

**Child with Special Needs (Republic Act No. 10165):** A child with developmental or physical disability.

**Child Abuse (Republic Act No. 7610):** Refers to the maltreatment, whether habitual or not, of the child, which includes any of the following:

1. Psychological and physical abuse, neglect, cruelty, sexual abuse, and emotional maltreatment;
2. Any act by deeds or words which debases, degrades or demeans the intrinsic worth and dignity of a child as a human being;
3. Unreasonable deprivation of his basic needs for survival, such as food and shelter; or,
4. Failure to immediately give medical treatment to an injured child, resulting in serious impairment of his growth and development, or in his permanent incapacity or death.

**Child Sexual Abuse (Republic Act No. 11930):** Refers to any form of communication through any platform or format, or any physical interaction between a child and any person when the child is being used for any act or activity inducing sexual stimulation, or for the purpose of sexual gratification, or in pursuit of the desire to have carnal knowledge of the child, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator or the victim, or the consent of the victim.

**Child Sexual Exploitation (Republic Act No. 11930):** Refers to any of the following acts, even if consent appears to have been granted by the child:

1. Child sexual abuse with consideration, whether monetary or nonmonetary, favor, or benefit in exchange for the opportunity

- to perform such abusive or exploitative act;
2. Actual sexual intercourse with a child or children with or without consideration;
3. Employing fraud, machination, undue influence, intimidation, threat or deception by any person to commit sexual abuse of or sexual intercourse with a child or children; or,
4. Any other similar or analogous acts related to child abuse, cruelty or exploitation, or to be responsible for other conditions prejudicial to the development of the child.

**Child Victim:** Refers to a child who suffered from abuse, exploitation, neglect and discrimination (e.g. sexual, physical, emotional, verbal, psychological, economic). The term includes Children Involved in Armed Conflict (CIAC).

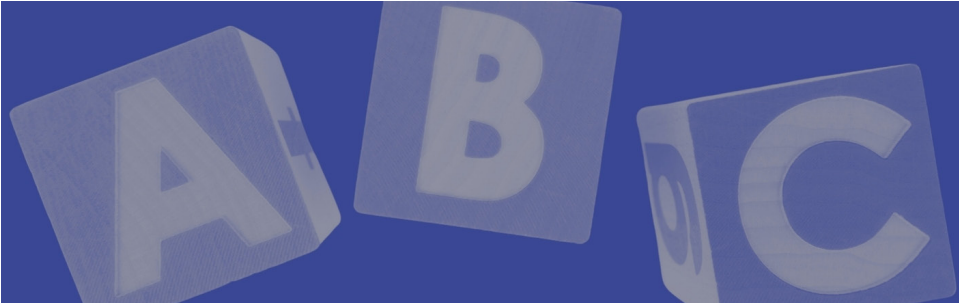
**Child Witness:** Refers to any person who, at the time of giving testimony, is below the age of eighteen (18) years.

**Child Labor (DOLE DO No. 65 s. 2004 and the Rules and Regulations Implementing Republic Act No. 9231 Amending Republic Act 7610):** Refers to any work or economic activity performed by a child, which subjects them to any form of exploitation or is harmful to their health, safety or physical, mental or psychosocial development.

**Guardians (Republic Act No. 11596):** Refers to relatives or individuals taking custody of a child in the absence of the parents; or anyone to whom a child is given or left for care or custody, whether permanent or temporary; or persons judicially appointed by a competent court as guardians.

**Harm:** Refers to any significant detrimental effect caused by any act, omission or circumstance on the physical, psychological or emotional well-being or development of the child.

**United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):** an international agreement that protects the rights of all children that ensures their survival, development, protection, and participation.



# List of Acronyms

|                 |                                                         |                |                                                                         |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>BCPC</b>     | Barangay Council for the Protection of Children         | <b>ICRC</b>    | International Committee of the Red Cross                                |
| <b>BWSC</b>     | Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns                 | <b>MIPA</b>    | Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs                                 |
| <b>CBOs</b>     | Community-Based Organizations                           | <b>NBI</b>     | National Bureau of Investigation                                        |
| <b>CIAC</b>     | Children Involved in Armed Conflict                     | <b>NCCT</b>    | National Council for Children's Television                              |
| <b>CICL</b>     | Children in Conflict with the Law                       | <b>NCIP</b>    | National Commission on Indigenous Peoples                               |
| <b>CISS</b>     | Children in Street Situations                           | <b>NCMF</b>    | National Commission on Muslim Filipinos                                 |
| <b>CLHIV</b>    | Children Living with HIV/AIDS                           | <b>NGOs</b>    | Non-Government Organizations                                            |
| <b>CNSP</b>     | Children in Need of Special Protection                  | <b>OPAPRU</b>  | Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity   |
| <b>CPIE</b>     | Child Protection in Emergencies                         | <b>OSAEC</b>   | Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children                        |
| <b>CSAC</b>     | Children in Situations of Armed Conflict                | <b>PCW</b>     | Philippine Commission on Women                                          |
| <b>CSAEM</b>    | Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials            | <b>PIA</b>     | Philippine Information Agency                                           |
| <b>CSOs</b>     | Civil Society Organizations                             | <b>PLCPD</b>   | Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development         |
| <b>CSPC</b>     | Committee on the Special Protection of Children         | <b>PNP</b>     | Philippine National Police                                              |
| <b>CWC</b>      | Council for the Welfare of Children                     | <b>MTRCB</b>   | Movie and Television Review and Classification Board                    |
| <b>DICT</b>     | Department of Information and Communications Technology | <b>SOGIESC</b> | Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, Sex Characteristics |
| <b>DOJ</b>      | Department of Justice                                   | <b>UNCRC</b>   | UN Convention on the Rights of the Child                                |
| <b>DOLE</b>     | Department of Labor and Employment                      | <b>WCPC</b>    | Women and Children Protection Center                                    |
| <b>DSWD</b>     | Department of Social Welfare and Development            |                |                                                                         |
| <b>FBOs</b>     | Faith-Based Organizations                               |                |                                                                         |
| <b>IAC CSAC</b> | Inter-Agency Council on CSAC                            |                |                                                                         |



# Introduction

The media plays a crucial role in raising the public's critical consciousness of the rights of children. In the context of a culture that values age and experience, the media can be an effective partner in changing perspectives that children's opinions and existence do not deserve to be given full recognition.

As media mirrors or reflects realities through their reportage, their portrayal of children also produces a profound impact on society's attitude towards children and childhood (International Federation of Journalists, 2002).

Public information contributes to shaping perceptions and behaviors of adults, especially towards children. As such, interventions directed towards helping the media report on children fairly and produce content that promotes the rights of children can also potentially create positive changes in public perception and behavior.

# 01 Context

In the Philippines, media practitioners and social media content creators are often guided by journalistic standards imposed by their media outfits or organizations. In certain cases, government agencies also attempt to regulate media practice by issuing guidelines that apply to certain situations, such as when reporting on children who are victims of abuse. However, these guidelines are not comprehensive enough and leave much to individual media practitioners' and social media content creators' discretion—from choice of content to treatment of children.

In 2008, the Department of Justice (DOJ), as co-chair of the Committee for the Special Protection of Children, released the revised version of the "Guide for Media Practitioners on the Reporting and Coverage of Children." Since then, the legal landscape has evolved to address emerging issues and forms of abuse and violence against children, and to promote access to justice services and other interventions for child victims. At present, relevant laws on child protection now include:

- **Republic Act 9165 (Comprehensive Drugs Act of 2002)**, which provides for the confidentiality of records of children under both the voluntary and compulsory submission program, or those of children discharged after compliance with conditions of suspended sentence. It further provides for confidentiality of records of probation and community service of the child.
- **Republic Act No. 9344 (Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006)**, which mandates that all records and proceedings involving children in conflict with the law—from initial contact until final disposition of the case—shall be considered privileged and confidential.
- **Rule on Examination of Child Witnesses**, as promulgated by the Supreme Court, which provides for penal sanctions for any violation of the abovementioned confidentiality provisions.
- **Republic Act No. 9262 (Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004)**, which provides that all records pertaining to cases of violence against women and their children shall be confidential...and that the right to privacy of the victim shall be respected. It also provides that whoever publishes or causes to be published, in any format, the name, address, telephone number, school, business address, employer, or other identifying information of a victim or an immediate family member, without the latter's consent, shall be liable to the court in the exercise of its power of contempt.
- **Republic Act No. 7610 as amended by Republic Act No. 9231 (Special Protection Of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation And Discrimination Act of 2003)**, which limits the employment of children under fifteen (15) years old and protect them against harsh labor conditions.

- **Republic Act No. 11648 (An Act Promoting for Stronger Protection Against Rape and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, increasing the age for determining the commission of statutory rape, and amending for the purpose Act No. 3815, as amended, otherwise known as The Anti-Rape Law of 1997, and Republic Act No. 7610, as amended, otherwise known as the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act)**, which amended the definition of Qualified Seduction under the Revised Penal Code by raising the age of sexual consent to sixteen (16), and strengthened the provisions on Child Prostitution and Sexual Abuse, Child Trafficking, and Obscene Publications and Indecent Shows involving child victims.
- **Republic Act No. 10630 (An act strengthening the Juvenile Justice System in the Philippines, amending for the purpose Republic Act No. 9344, otherwise known as the “Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006”)**.
- **Republic Act No. 9231 (An Act Providing for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Affording Stronger Protection for the Working Child, Amending for this Purpose Republic Act No. 7610, as amended, Otherwise Known as the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act)**.
- **Republic Act No. 10175 (Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012)**, which provides for stiffer penalties for child pornography when committed through a computer system.
- **Republic Act No. 10821 (Children’s Emergency Relief and Protection Act)**, which mandates the provision of emergency relief and protection for children before, during, and after disasters and other emergency situations.
- **Republic Act No. 11188 (Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict)**, which provides special protection to children in situations of armed conflict from all forms of abuse, violence, neglect, cruelty, discrimination, and other conditions prejudicial to their development, taking into consideration their gender, cultural, ethnic and religious background.
- **Republic Act No. 11313 (Safe Spaces Act)**, which provides for heightened protection of children against sexual harassment in schools and training-related institutions.
- **Republic Act No. 11596 (Anti-Child Marriage Law of 2021)**, which prohibits the practice of child marriage and imposes penalties against any person who shall be involved in the facilitation or solemnization of child marriage, and cohabitation of an adult with a child outside wedlock.
- **Republic Act No. 11930 (Anti-Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) and Anti Child-Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials (CSAEM) Act of 2022)**, which punishes OSAEC and CSAEM-related acts, including the production, distribution, possession, and access of CSAEM.
- **Executive Order No. 79 (Establishing the MAKABATA Program and the MAKABATA Helpline 1383)**, which provides for a one-stop system to address and monitor all issues and concerns of children in need of special protection (CNSPs).

As far as the media landscape is concerned, there have also been major shifts in media distribution and consumption trends since 2007. The Philippines is said to be consistently growing towards becoming one of the highest online markets in Southeast Asia (The Digitalization of the Media Landscape in the Philippines, n.d.). As early as 2020, the Philippines rose to the top five countries with the highest online media market value in Southeast Asia, driven by tech-savvy netizens who shifted their media-consumption habits to online platforms. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the internet was found to have supplanted television as the most-consumed medium (Meltwater, 2024).

These intersecting developments require a review and revision of the 2007 guidelines.



## 02 Coverage

This guide is developed for use by “media” and “content creators and social media personalities,” as they are previously defined. This is designed to protect all children from actual and potential harm that may be caused by or result from media coverage and reporting, with special emphasis on the vulnerabilities of children with special concerns and those in exceptionally difficult situations.



## 03 How to use these guidelines

This revised guide aims to address the lack of a comprehensive set of guidelines that covers: 1) both the traditional and new media platforms; 2) the expanded definition of “media practitioners,” which digital platforms have enabled; and, 3) the diverse social categories of children and their intersecting identities, all of whom require special attention and certain levels of sensitivity.

These guidelines aim to help shape the “best interest of the child” principle, as applied to media practice. The best interest of the child as provided for in Republic Act No. 9344 refers to “the totality of the circumstances and conditions which are most congenial to the survival, protection and feelings of security of the child and most encouraging to the child’s physical, psychological and emotional development. It also means the least detrimental available alternative for safeguarding the growth and development of the child.” In defining the concept, this guide hopes to assist media practitioners and social media content creators move beyond using their moral compass towards having clear guidance as they navigate between the exercise of press freedom and deciding on what is good for the child.

This guide is divided into three parts. It begins by presenting the set of five principles of child-rights-based media practice. Based on the UN CRC, these principles are supposed to serve as cornerstones for media reporting.

Each of the principles are then expounded through practical tips and considerations in the second part. This portion addresses the media’s request for specific guidelines and practical tips on how the principles are translated into actual practice. Finally, it closes with a set of additional recommendations that the media can consider when writing, reporting on, or featuring children needing special protection or attention.

This guide has been made as concise as possible, considering the users’ busy and deadline-driven schedules. Those who have time to explore other resources are pointed to where additional information may be accessed.

**PART**

# 1

## **Media and the Best Interest of the Child**





## PART 1

# Media and the Best Interest of the Child

These guidelines are founded on the overarching principle of “best interests of the child.” This principle is often defined as the totality of the circumstances and conditions that are most congenial to the survival; protection; and feelings of security of the child. The UNCRC provision on the best interests of the child (Article 3) instructs adults to think about how their decisions will affect children, and to always do what is best for them.

Applied to media practice, the “best interests of the child” principle requires consistent consideration of the impact on children of editorial and creative decisions before, during, and even after the media interaction. Especially in instances not covered by or anticipated in these guidelines, the need to protect and promote what is best for children is left to the discretion of the media. This exercise of editorial judgment should remain guided by what does not harm the child.



## 01 Privacy

Every child has the right to privacy (Section 16, UNCRC). In the same way that the law must protect children's privacy, family, home, communications, and reputation or good name from any harm, media practice should also protect and promote this right. Most importantly, the media's power and influence should be used positively to fulfill children's right to privacy and not compromise it.

Respecting the privacy of children in media practice means ensuring that content is produced in a way that shields children from the harm, stigma, and exploitation that are likely to result from public exposure of their personal circumstances and identities. The principle of upholding privacy recognizes that undue exposure of children's identity and personal crisis, especially on social media, subjects them to the possibility of public ridicule and unwanted public attention, which could result in long-term harm and trauma.

## 02 Agency

Children have the right to choose their own thoughts, opinions and religions (Article 13, UNCRC). The agency of children is understood as their capacity to do things, to act on the world, and to make a difference (Oswell, 2013). This view runs in contrast to the traditional perception that children, not being adults yet, do not have the capacity to act rationally. Although this right is subject to other people's and exercise of their own rights, the principle of agency recognizes that adults have the responsibility to guide children so that they learn how to properly use this right as they mature.

Promoting the agency of children in media practice means ensuring that children's participation in media reporting comes with the acknowledgement that they have the right to provide their assent separately from their parents or guardians, and to withdraw this if they so decide, subject at all times to their best interest. It seeks to normalize the changing perception of children as full human beings capable of making decisions that deserve respect and recognition, and guidance from adults where needed in pursuit of their best interest.

## 03 Participation

Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them (Article 12, UN CRC). The right to participation is an ongoing or continuous process of children's expression and active involvement in decision-making at all levels, especially in matters which concern them. This principle is meant to provide the media with a compelling reason to consult with children and get their views, especially on matters that affect them, to recognize that their perspective is an important element of balanced reporting.

Children should be given opportunities to talk, draw, write or express themselves in any other way appropriate for their evolving capacities.

In addition, Children also have the right to access information from the Internet, radio, television, newspapers, and other sources to help them exercise their right to meaningfully participate in discussions, especially when it affects them.

In sum, this principle holds the media to account for two things: 1) ensuring that the information provided to children is not harmful to them; and, 2) proactively consulting children so that they can contribute their thoughts and opinions, especially on relevant matters, through interviews, dialogues and discussions, but subject to their best interests at all times.

## 04 Dignity

The principle of dignity celebrates the inherent worth and value of every child. It requires that their rights are respected and protected, including their right to freely express themselves and stand up for what they believe in, as well as their right to enjoy a full and decent life. Dignity also requires that children not be subjected to stigma and ridicule, or be judged negatively for their choices, decisions, situations and circumstances.

This principle recognizes that dignity—just like children's rights—is universal. As such, it requires that all children, regardless of circumstances, be treated with dignity in media presentations. When reporting on stories of people living in marginalized conditions, the media must be cautious to not present children in an undignified manner or to glamorize their difficult situations.

## 05 Sensitivity

Journalistic activity which touches on the lives and welfare of children must be carried out with sensitivity and recognition of the varying vulnerable situations of children. Utmost care must be taken so that children are not re-victimized or re-traumatized by their interaction with the media. This principle also acknowledges that “children” is not a homogenous category. As such, the media must be mindful of the level of sensitivity that handling of or reporting on certain categories of children requires.

This principle also relates to the principle of non-discrimination espoused in Article 2 of the UNCRC. All children should be able to fully exercise all the rights enshrined in the UNCRC, regardless of their identity, their place of birth or residence, the language they speak, their religion, their thoughts and opinions, physical appearance, sex, economic status, and family relations.

**PART**

# 2

**Practical Guide**





## PART 2

# Practical Guide

One of the landmarks of a democratic society is the access to information on matters of public concern. Thus, Article III, Section 7 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution provides:

*“The right of the people to information on matters of public concern shall be recognized. Access to official records, and to documents, and papers pertaining to official acts, transactions or decisions, as well as to government research data used as basis for policy development, shall be afforded the citizen, subject to such limitations as may be provided by law”.*

As a cornerstone in a democratic society, the media provides the means for a free market of ideas. Access by the media to information is given wide latitude most especially when it comes to matters of governance, public and political affairs. However, it must be noted that the very Constitutional provision recognizing the right to access information likewise states that the right is not without limitations. Access to information is “subject to limitations as may be provided by law”. One such limitation is the access to information, and the publication thereof, on matters pertaining to children.

The challenge to media practitioners and social media content creators is to carry out their duty of informing the public effectively while being aware of the need to protect and enhance the rights of the child. Without undermining the media's independence and their right to exercise press freedom, this guide intends to raise media awareness on the responsibility that comes with the power and freedom. With its influential role, the media is uniquely positioned to amplify issues concerning the rights of the child, and uphold these rights through self-regulation.

This guide encourages the media to observe the highest ethical and professional standards in reporting and covering cases of children, such that in all publicity concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be the primary concern.

The five principles, discussed in more detail below, are supposed to help the media change their practice so that they contribute to the protection and promotion of the rights of the Filipino child. Each principle is further expounded into five practical tips. For instances that are not covered by the practical guide, five self-assessment questions are also provided to help the media independently evaluate and ultimately decide what is best for the child.





## **First:**

### **Uphold children's right to privacy.**

Children have the right to privacy. In the context of children's rights, "privacy" refers to the right against undesirable, unwanted, unwarranted and unlawful intrusions committed by any person into the life, liberty or security of the child (G.R. No. 86720, September 2, 1994; G.R. No. 202666, September 29, 2014). The Data Privacy Act penalizes violations of the right to privacy of any person, including children although not specified. The Data Privacy Act of 2012 makes it unlawful to, among others, process personal information and sensitive personal information without authority; access personal information and sensitive personal information; and, maliciously disclose personal information.

In the same context, privacy is understood to be not an absolute right. Intrusions into the privacy of an individual may be warranted in certain instances such as when it is prescribed by law, when it is necessary to achieve a legitimate aim, and when such intrusion is proportionate to the aim pursued. When the subject of inquiry is a child, the intrusion may also be prudent, if not required, if it serves their best interest.

The need to uphold the privacy of children is meant to prevent harm, stigma, and exploitation, or any threat of these, which may result from their public exposure or presentation. This need becomes more important in digital platforms where the possibility of "going viral" for the wrong reasons and exposing the child to cyberbullying and public attacks are always high.

Undue public exposure of children, especially those who were subjected to traumatic experiences, results in many other issues, including: the risk of them being subjected to bullying, sexual abuse and further exploitation, as well as actual harm and danger. Given this objective, the media should recognize that upholding the right of children to privacy contributes essentially to promoting their dignity and well-being.

## ***Practical Tips***

- 1** In the best interest of the child, the identity of a child victim (e.g. abuse, CSAC, CICL) and child witness shall never be disclosed whether directly or indirectly. No information that would lead to the identity of the child or any member of his/her family shall be published or broadcast. It is prohibited for media practitioners to create unnecessary and sensationalized publicity regarding a child as the offended party. Any violation of this Act leading to moral harm and distress of the victim will be subject to the appropriate penalties under Article XI, Section 29 (Confidentiality) of Republic Act No. 7610.
- 2** Refrain from giving out specific, identifiable details, especially those information that will violate the privacy and compromise the safety of children. Be cautious when reporting identifiable markers (e.g., barangay where the child lives or where the incident happened, family information, address, age of the child, school attended) . Instead of disclosing specific details (e.g., barangay or name of the school), opt to state the general area (e.g., city, town, or province) instead. When conducting interviews, any visual representation of family members should also be concealed or anonymized. This includes hiding identifiable features and ensuring that images do not reveal personal attributes that could lead to identification.
- 3** Don't take—and give—more information than you need. Only collect and share personal information that is directly relevant to the story and necessary for public interest. Always consult or seek the assistance of the proper authorities when obtaining data and information on cases related to children.
- 4** Keep data safe. Securely store any data collected, especially about the child, and ensure its limited access only to authorized personnel.
- 5** Be careful when livestreaming. When preparing for broadcast or livestreaming, or taking photos for media use, be mindful of the children in the vicinity and strive to preserve their anonymity, especially when the subject of the report is related to children or involves children. If possible, secure the venue to prevent children from being exposed to live coverage or photos.

### ***Self-Assessment Questions***

When in doubt, ask the following questions to help you decide how to protect the privacy of child subjects.

- 1** In creating content, were sufficient steps taken to anonymize the child's identity and/or hide their personal and/or identifiable information? Will people who know them personally be able to identify them? If yes, consider other steps to hide their identity and information.
- 2** Is all the information being collected relevant to my story and necessary for public interest? If not, consider limiting information being collected.
- 3** Have safety measures to avoid unintentionally revealing sensitive details about the child been implemented? If not, consider taking other precautionary measures.
- 4** Is all the information I have collected relevant to my story and necessary for public interest? If not, consider limiting information that you are collecting.
- 5** Have I implemented safety measures to avoid unintentionally revealing sensitive details about the child? If no, consider taking other precautionary measures.

### ***Further Reading***

*Data Privacy Act*





## Second:

### Respect the child's agency.

When we uphold the agency of the child, we recognize that the child is a full human being endowed with individuality, capable of forming opinions and making decisions for themselves. We also acknowledge the need to privilege the insights of children, especially on matters that directly affect them. This is consistent with their right to participation. This principle understands that undermining the opinions and voices of children, especially on matters that concern them, violates their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Given children's evolving capacities, we also recognize that the principle of agency does not grant children the absolute right to make decisions. Adult individuals and institutions are expected to step in when the child's exercise of their right to agency endangers themselves and/or those around them. As such, in the exercise of this right, the media is encouraged to help ensure that they are guided and not dismissed. At the same time, the principle of agency also places the burden on media practitioners and social media content creators to weigh this children's right against their best interest, and always choose what is best for children.

These guidelines encourage media practitioners and social media content creators to proactively contribute to the development of children's capacity for self-determination by ensuring opportunities to listen to children's voices, and by taking their insights and opinions into serious consideration.

At all times, however, even with pressure to turn in materials by deadlines, the media is expected to be prudent and patient enough to secure the agreement of children and their parents or guardians, and only after clearly explaining the purpose for their participation, as well as what they may expect when the content is publicly released.

#### *Practical Tips*

- 1 Be upfront with the child subject and give enough time for preparation. Refrain from conducting on-the-spot, impromptu or ambush interviews with children, which may subject them to undue stress. If possible, provide them with enough information before, during, and after the engagement to help them understand the scope of possible repercussions of the exposure.
- 2 Always obtain the informed consent of the child's parents or guardians and the assent of the child. Before collecting or publishing any personal information, insights, and opinions for public consumption, make sure to secure the informed consent of adult individuals who are legally allowed to consent on behalf of the child. In addition, also ensure that informed assent, which is the agreement given by someone unable to legally consent to participate in an activity, as in the case of minors, is also given.

- 3 Provide the option for the child to opt out at any time. Make sure that the child and their parents or guardians clearly understand that they can withdraw their consent and assent to the continued interaction, or publication of their information, opinions and other forms of expressions. Upon withdrawal of the consent or assent, take down the published material or information and notify the child and their parents of such removal.
- 4 Ensure adult supervision. When interviewing children, the presence of a parent is always required. In special cases, such as when interviewing a child victim of abuse, have a social worker and a sign language interpreter present, if it will serve the best interest of the child.
- 5 Consider media exposure or interviews only as a last resort to protect their best interest. When dealing with child victims, find out if the child has had previous media exposure or interview so as not to re-victimize the child by asking the same questions. At all times, respect the child's right to decline media or interviews.

### ***Self-Assessment Questions***

When in doubt, ask the following questions to help you decide how to best promote the child's agency.

- 1 Does the child feel that they are in a safe and enabling environment where they are free to express themselves without prejudice? If not, consult a professional to determine how best to set up the interaction.
- 2 When the child makes a decision for themselves, does said decision endanger the child's other rights, such as the right to self-determination, privacy and safety? If yes, consider refraining from pursuing the interaction or the story.
- 3 Does the child feel free to express their individuality and capability to make sound decisions? If not, consider exploring unconventional and creative ways of getting the child's opinions without endangering their rights.
- 4 Are the consent and assent clear and unequivocal? If not, clarify the purpose of the interaction and the possible outcomes of the media content when publicized, then get the consent and assent documented.
- 5 Does the consent and assent clearly cover participation in the media interaction, disclosure of the identity and personal information, and eventual publication of the media content? If not, specify all expectations, clarify and document the consent and assent.

### ***Further Reading***

*Data Privacy Act*

### Third:

## Provide opportunities for children's meaningful participation.

In relation to agency, the principle of participation celebrates children as bonafide members of society. It also acknowledges that while they may lack the experience, children have unlimited potentials that are further enhanced when they are given opportunities for meaningful participation in society.

The role of the media in normalizing children's participation is also very important. The principle of participation requires three things from media practitioners: 1) first, to provide children with sufficient information that they can use to meaningfully participate; 2) to proactively seek out the views and opinions of children, especially on matters that affect them; and, 3) to ensure that safe spaces are provided for children to freely exercise this right without pressure and the threat of harm and danger. This principle acknowledges that providing children with opportunities to tell their own stories and make their opinions count contributes to their development and widens the perspectives that should inform media content.

The objective for promoting child participation is to help raise generations of children with the ability to use critical thinking in forming their own views and expressing them. This right to participate is guaranteed for all children, especially those that are not often heard, or to whom the existing opportunities for participation are mostly inaccessible.

For example, the UNCRC (Article 23) emphasizes the directive to the state to ensure that children with mental or physical disabilities enjoy a full and decent life and are able to actively participate in the community. Applied to the media, the principle of participation underscores the importance of giving weight to the opinions and insights of children under exceptionally difficult circumstances such as those with disabilities, IP children, Moro children, and children in situations of armed conflict, for whom there may be more constraints and barriers to participation.

Finally, the right to participate also involves the right to choose not to participate. While we value the insights of children and should use these to inform content creation, it is also important to remember that children's freedom to not exercise this right should also be respected. They are not to be coerced into providing their opinions or expressing their thoughts if they would rather not do so, as articulated in the previous principle.

### ***Practical Tips***

- 1 Listen to children's voices. When creating content that affects or is relevant to children, always seek the views, opinions and perspectives of children, regardless of their SOGIESC, and children from relevant social categories such as indigenous peoples (IPs), children with disabilities, children in street situations, among others.

- 2 Conduct risk assessment. Before deciding to interview or publish the views of children for your media content, assess the risks first to ensure that your interview subjects will not be exposed to undue harm.
- 3 Create an empowering, safe space. Ensure that the engagement with children is carried out with the appropriate level of sensitivity. Be extra cautious when interacting with or reporting on vulnerable children, such as those who are in conflict with the law, victims of online sexual abuse and exploitation, or those in emergency situations.
- 4 Seek expert opinion. Children should be respected regardless of their situation, age, culture, religion, gender, ethnicity, views, or socioeconomic background. Thus, opportunities for media engagements must be conducted without any discrimination or biases. They must be presented with options that are appropriate to their needs, capacities, and culture or way of life. Coordinate with relevant agencies such as the NCMF, Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs (MIPA) or the NCIP when interviewing or creating content related to children from Muslim communities or Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples, respectively.
- 5 Create a safe and trusting environment. This includes ensuring that the media engagement will be a positive experience for them, using clear and appropriate language, and providing a translator especially if a language unfamiliar to them will be used. Make sure that children are not intimidated or coerced during the interview process, and they are able to freely express themselves. Use a reassuring tone, avoid pressure and ensure that the children can say "no" or choose to not answer the question.

## **Self-Assessment Questions**

When in doubt, ask the following questions to help you in safely promoting children's participation:

- 1 Is the content comprehensive? Does it consider the views, opinions and perspectives of children? If not, consider interviewing children.
- 2 Will publishing the content, in whatever format it may be, help uplift the status of children? If yes, consider pursuing the content, but make sure that publication will not result in future or present harm on the children interviewed or featured.
- 3 Is the story about poverty or any other conditions of marginalization? If yes, exercise extra precaution to prevent the child's participation from glamorizing or sensationalizing their condition.
- 4 Is the participation of the child, although with their assent and consent from their parents or guardians, potentially harmful or dangerous? Consider not pursuing the planned content, or plan to identify and establish precautionary measures to conceal the child's identity and personal information.
- 5 Which parts of the interview, secured with consent and assent, should be published? If unclear, consider keeping sensitive information that may potentially result in harm to the child and their family or community.

## **Further Reading**

*Child Participation in Action: Enhanced Guidebook on Child Participation in the Philippines, Council for the Welfare of Children, 2023*

*Presidential Decree No. 603, Article 4, on the Responsibilities of the Child*

# 4

## Fourth:

### Treat children with dignity at all times.

At all times, the dignity of children should be respected and upheld. As such, ensuring that children are presented or represented in a dignified manner should be the primary consideration in all creative and editorial decision making processes. This principle acknowledges the inherent vulnerability of children to exploitation, as well as the long-term effects of such abuses on them and their future. This principle is based on the right of children to be protected from all kinds of exploitation or from being taken advantage of, even in situations that are not anticipated by these guidelines.

Upholding the dignity of all children, regardless of their situations and social positions, requires media practitioners and social media content creators to be mindful of risks associated with engaging children in interviews, as well as with the resulting public exposure and possible backlash. However, media must be mindful that children in exceptionally difficult circumstances, such as those children in situations of armed conflict (CSAC), children in conflict with the law (CICL), children living with HIV/AIDS (CLHIV), and children in street situations (CISS), may require more care and caution to ensure that they are not subjected to stigma as a result of the interaction and eventual publication, given their circumstances.

#### *Practical Tips*

- 1 Do not objectify children. Do not sexualize children by presenting them or using their image as objects of sexual desire. Keep in mind that in digital platforms, even innocent photos of children may be grabbed and used for sexual purposes.
- 2 Do not promote OSAEC and CSAEM. Do not advertise, publish, print, broadcast or distribute by any means content that promotes online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC) or any child sexual abuse or exploitation material (CSAEM).
- 3 Avoid using images that demean or exploit children. Rather, use images that portray children in a respectful and positive light. Refrain from perpetuating "poverty porn," which tends to sensationalize the child's less-privileged circumstances.
- 4 Do not publish children's images in revealing clothing, especially when cleavage and other private body parts are exposed.
- 5 Be trauma-informed. Keep in mind that the child you are interacting with may be experiencing or may have experienced trauma. Ensure that the engagement with the child and the final content do not cause retraumatization. Also, avoid sensationalizing stories of or with children.
- 5 Protect the child from stigma. Avoid language, images or narratives that stigmatize or harm the child's reputation (e.g. blurring of faces, using mugshot), which could lead to lasting trauma.



### **Self-Assessment Questions**

When in doubt, ask the following questions to help you decide how to preserve the dignity of children:

- 1 Is the content likely to encourage discrimination or incite hatred? If yes, consider exploring angles that foster understanding among different ethnicities, cultures or religious groups instead.
- 2 Is the child being placed in a compromising state? Are they being exposed to exploitation and harm? If yes, consider revisiting how the child is portrayed. Consider how the child will feel about the way they are portrayed in the photo or video, or how it will affect their reputation years later.
- 3 Is there a post-media exposure mechanism or activity such as debriefing and processing to ensure that the child's exposure to media has not violated any of their rights? If none, consider setting another interaction to include briefing and debriefing in the process.
- 4 Is the image "safe" to use? Or can it possibly be used to harm a child directly or indirectly? If yes, consider other options for the images, or decide against publishing any image if it is not necessary.
- 5 Is the content supposedly addressing a social issue? Does it compel children to be presented in their dismal realities? If yes, consider exploring an empowering angle to the story, one that does not dwell on the conditions of the child. Also, present interventions that are being done to improve these conditions.

### **Further Reading**

*Protocol for Reaching Out to Children in Street Situations, Council for the Welfare of Children, 2020*

*Republic Act 11930 or the OSAEC CSAEM Law*

# 5

## Fifth: Handle every child's story with sensitivity.

In the UNCRC, there are provisions that refer to specific subcategories of children, including children who are adopted, refugee children, children with disabilities, and children in conflict with the law. Consistent with the UNCRC, this principle recognizes that more is required of institutions such as the media in ensuring that these children are able to exercise their rights equally with other more privileged categories of children.

Sensitivity in the context of media practice relates to the awareness that children may have different identities (e.g., ethnicity, religion), may be coming from different situations (e.g., street situations, armed conflict, children in emergency situations), and may be affected by different circumstances (e.g. poverty, violence or abuse). Sensitivity thus requires being able to treat children, especially those living in marginalized conditions, in a manner that acknowledges their identities, respects their experiences, and seeks to empower them.

Sensitivity also recognizes and addresses the potential impact and implications of media coverage on the life and future of a child, of children in general, or the welfare of families and communities where these children belong. Finally, sensitivity requires that media practitioners carefully and skillfully navigate engagements with children living in exceptionally difficult circumstances so that the interaction and the content eventually produced do not contribute to further marginalization, discrimination, oppression, harm or danger.

### *Practical Tips*

- 1 Get expert opinion. When dealing with children in need of special protection or those in exceptionally difficult circumstances, such as those who are victims of abuse and exploitation, consult or have the presence of experts in the media engagement to guide your content production.

Child victim-survivors and those with traumatic experiences should be supported by a licensed social worker while children with disabilities should have a health care provider or practitioner present to manage the experience with them. Also, get the opinions and perspectives of the local community, ethnic groups, and religious sectors opinions/perspectives. For example, documentation and coverage of stories about children engaged in early marriage may need to be sensitive to norms, religious, and cultural practices.

- 2 Mind your language. Choose age-appropriate and compassionate language to avoid stigmatization and to show respect for an individual's experience/s. Also, use words and language that can be easily understood by children. Avoid discriminatory words.

- 3 Be prepared and follow all protocols. Ensure that all persons or staff involved during the media engagement adhere to the organization's child protection policy, or in the lack thereof, a zero-tolerance protocol which prevents any form of bullying, use of profanities or swearing, aggressive or offensive behavior, and invasion of personal space or boundaries of the child.
- 4 Build trust. Establish a positive relationship with children and their families based on an understanding of the child's circumstances and the societal issues affecting them. Follow up with your sources after interviews to check on their well-being.
- 5 Practice empathy. Maintain a balance between empathy and journalistic integrity to uphold ethical standards while practicing sensitivity.

### ***Self-Assessment Questions***

When in doubt, be guided by the following self-assessment questions:

- 1 Will the content be harmful to a child—or to another similarly situated child—who may be exposed to it? If yes, consider dropping the planned content.
- 2 Are there triggers/potential triggers in the content to be produced? If yes, consider inserting a trigger warning before any triggering portion.
- 3 Is the child's role or involvement in the produced media/material age-appropriate and gender-responsive? If not, consider revising the material to make it age-appropriate and gender-responsive.
- 4 Does the portrayal of the child perpetuate stereotypes or generalizations based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, or other factors? If yes, consider revising the portrayal and ensuring that it tackles gender sensitivity.
- 5 Have social workers, child development experts, educators, or psychologists been consulted to ensure that the content is handled appropriately? Are any of the rights of the children being violated in producing the content? If not or unsure, consider consulting with a professional.

### ***Further Reading***

*Gender-Fair Media Guidebook, Philippine Commission on Women, 2017*

**PART**

# 3

## **Children in Need of Special Protection**



# Children in Need of Special Protection

Certain categories of children require special consideration and higher levels of sensitivity owing to their experiences and/or conditions. Media practitioners and social media content creators are encouraged to use this portion of the guide to supplement the contents in the overall practical guide (Part 2).

Executive Order No. 79 series of 2024 defines Children in Need of Special Protection (CNSPs) as all persons below 18 years old or those 18 years old and over but are unable to fully take care of themselves because of physical or mental disability or conditions, are vulnerable to, or are victims of, abuse, neglect, exploitation, cruelty, discrimination, violence, and other similar circumstances, including but not limited to, child labor, online sexual abuse or exploitation of children (OSAEC), child sexual abuse or exploitation of materials (CSAEM), child trafficking, and other circumstances which gravely threaten or endanger a child's survival and normal development. CNSPs shall also include children in conflict with the law, children living in alternative care, and children living with human immunodeficiency virus.

## ***Victims of OSAEC/CSAEM***

- 1 Protecting the privacy of OSAEC/CSAEM victims, as well as CNSP, is of utmost importance. Aside from the fact that protection of the children's privacy in these situations is mandated by law, disclosure of their identity and personal information could lead to different negative outcomes such as:
  - a Further endangerment and long-term trauma, especially for victims of OSAEC/CSAEM;
  - b Active investigations compromised, in which case, parties violating the privacy of the child victims may be held liable for obstruction of justice;
  - c Exposure of the child to bullying and further discrimination;
  - d Undue exposure and unwanted attention, which could further hamper their development.
- 2 Keep in mind that these children are often victims of multiple abuse, exploitation, and neglect, and are often without proper parental guidance. A social worker, in the absence of a parent or guardian, or when a child refuses to be interviewed, may instead talk to the media about the services or intervention being provided to the child who has suffered abuse or any forms of violence.
- 3 When setting up interviews and other interactions, ensure that the interaction shall take place in a physically safe environment, and that the child is provided with emotional support in the presence of an adult, who may be the parent or guardian, local (e.g. barangay) officials, or social worker.

- 4 Consult other references to be fully informed about the issues affecting these children, their proper handling and treatment, and appropriate ways of engagement.
- 5 Coordinate with or direct actual concerns to the Law Enforcement Agencies (e.g. NBI, PNP, DOJ, among others) for victims of OSAEC/CSAEM, local social welfare office, and the local councils for the protection of children.

### ***Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (CSAC) and Child Protection in Emergencies (CPIE)***

- 1 Children in situations of conflict and emergencies are typically operating in the presence of trauma. As such, any form of media engagement with children is not allowed as this is against their best interest. Do not insist on interviews as only authorized officials are allowed access to them and only social workers are qualified to decide for them under these circumstances. For CSAC, the CSAC Law Implementing Rules and Regulations also directs all parties to respect the children's right to silence.
- 2 Considering the gravity of the situation that these children are in, their ability to provide assent may also be impeded or affected, especially when the child is also a victim of sexual abuse and exploitation, is in conflict with the law, or involved in armed conflict. In such cases, ensure that they are handled with utmost sensitivity.
- 3 Consult existing policies such as Republic Act No. 11188 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations for special protocols on handling CSAC and children in emergency situations. Other laws that may be helpful are Republic Act No. 11930 (Anti-OSAEC and Anti CSAEM Act of 2022), Republic Act No. 10821 (Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act), and Republic Act No. 9344 (Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act), as amended by Republic Act No. 10630.
- 4 Interaction, when allowed by the proper supervising authority, should also be trauma-informed. Take extra precaution to prevent retraumatization. Note, too, that rescued CIAC shall not be used for any political propaganda nor be unnecessarily exposed to media in violation of their rights to privacy, security and confidentiality of their cases.
- 5 Also consider that the trauma experienced by children is compounded by gender-based forms of discrimination, especially for children of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Ensure awareness of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) concepts for gender-sensitive handling of children with diverse SOGIESC in such situations.

## ***Children Living in Marginalized Situations***

- 1 Girl-children and children of diverse SOGIESC who are subjected to gender-based discrimination, as well as children with intersecting conditions of marginalization brought about by intersecting marginalized identities such as ethnicity, disability, religion, socioeconomic conditions, geographic isolation, among other factors, require special interventions for them to be socially included. For these categories of children, the principle of participation needs to be actively pursued. Children need to be assured and made aware of their right to express their own views freely and to be taken seriously, especially for media content related to their situations, conditions, and issues.
- 2 When covering children belonging to these categories, it is crucial to consider various factors that intersect in their lives, SOGIESC, culture and religion, education or the lack thereof, and existing disabilities, among others. Special attention should also be given to specific groups such as children affected by displacement, those at risk, children involved in substance abuse, indigenous children, children with disabilities, and those seeking refuge. Their individual rights must be respected, and interactions with them should typically be supervised by authorized professionals, particularly social workers. Exercise prudence when seeking interviews as it is in their best interest that media access be limited.
- 3 To better understand the situations of children belonging to these social categories, it is best to consider their households and communities as context. Children's behaviors are influenced by socialization factors imposed by the institutions that surround them. Make sure to understand the influences of the family, the school, and the immediate community to properly frame your narrative and avoid exposing children to negative judgment.
- 4 When writing about or featuring children in shelters, always capture the interventions that are being provided to divert them from their situations. This will help identify an empowering angle that could positively influence similarly situated children.
- 5 Concerns regarding children from these social categories may typically be brought to local government units, schools, community leaders, and social workers.

## ***Children in Street Situations***

- 1 When dealing with children in street situations, preserving the dignity of the child is of utmost importance. Media practitioners and social media content creators should be aware of and ready to handle trauma experienced by the child from exposure to extreme poverty, abuse, and physical danger. Media practitioners and social media content creators must also be aware of the inherently undignified situations that they are in. Consider helping them regain their dignity through proper treatment.
- 2 Find guidance in the 2011 Protocol on Reaching Out to Children in Street Situations, where it is required that the reach out team be composed of the local social worker as lead, assisted by law enforcement officers, members of the Barangay Child Protection Centers (BCPCs), as well as non-government organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs).
- 3 During media interactions or while planning for one, make sure to create and manage a safe space for children in street situations. Consider, too, that these children may be victims of violence, abuse and intimidation, and are often exposed to danger. As such, keep in mind that the “do no harm” principle especially applies. Avoiding harm to the child in the course of the media interaction should also extend beyond physical dangers but should also include the obligation to afford them dignity and respect.
- 4 Consider, too, the differential situation of girl children and boy children in street situations and be mindful of the possibility of exposure to trafficking in persons, prostitution, sexual abuse and exploitation. Ensure that proper caution is exercised when dealing with such sensitive topics as incest and early pregnancies. Always consult with experts when in doubt as to the proper handling of these children.
- 5 When interviewing children in street situations, actively listen to their account and acknowledge their experiences while ensuring their safety throughout the activity. Post-activity, consider linking them to social welfare service providers where they will be better managed and provided with proper care.

## ***Children Engaged in Child Labor***

- 1 In case the child in the report or documentary material is engaged in child labor, the producer shall refer the child to the nearest DOLE Regional/Provincial/Field Office for the necessary services needed by the child and their family.

# Key Takeaways



## Key Takeaways

- 1 The guide is intended to help media practitioners, social media content creators, and producers in developing and producing content that promotes the rights of children and protects them from all forms of harm or danger by ensuring the utmost consideration and sensitivity to children's vulnerability and special needs. This may not cover all possible situations that media practitioners and social media content creators may find themselves in. In such cases, it is always better to use the five principles to assess the situation and make decisions.
- 2 Remember to secure the parent's or guardian's consent, or the registered social worker's consent in case both are not present, as well as the child's assent prior to any media interaction and all throughout the process of content production and publication.
- 3 Time sensitivity or urgency of the content should not be used to justify noncompliance with the guidelines. Always consider the impact of the improper handling of children. When media content involving children is produced without the best interest of the child in mind, this can lead to increased trauma, misrepresentation of their experiences, and exposure to further harm, including cyberbullying.
- 4 Take advantage of opportunities to engage sectors that provide services to children in dialogues and knowledge sharing. Continuously update your knowledge on trends and best practices for maintaining ethical and responsible reporting on children.
- 5 Raise actual concerns with relevant government agencies. For concerns, contact the Council for the Welfare of Children through the following:  
  
**Email Address:** [cwc@cwc.gov.ph](mailto:cwc@cwc.gov.ph)  
**Trunkline:** 8461-66- 20; 8366-19-10; 8461-65-53  
**Facebook:** [fb.com/CWCgov.ph](https://www.facebook.com/CWCgov.ph)  
**MAKABATA Helpline 1383**  
(for reports on abuse, exploitation, and neglect):  
**Hotline:** 1383  
**Mobile Numbers:** 09193541383(SMART) and 09158022375 (GLOBE)  
**Email Address:** [makabatahelpline@cwc.gov.ph](mailto:makabatahelpline@cwc.gov.ph)

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